



President's Message

Dearest brothers!

It is estimated that in the sexually promiscuous and abortion-tainted American culture some 40% of women in the United States have undergone surgical abortions. That is a horrific statistic in itself, but the number of people, besides the women involved in the abortion decision, is exponentially higher: husbands who push their wives into getting an abortion; parents who make their teenage girls get abortions; adulterous men who wish to cover up their irresponsibility; and the medical and business personnel of the abortion industry itself, just to name a few. While the permissive abortion law makes abortion readily available and even at times a cultural expectation in America, the reality of abortion and its aftermath is exactly the same in



all cultures of the world. As one of our bumper stickers says, "Abortion means one dead and one wounded." I would say that the number of wounded is much, much higher with each abortion.

In this issue, brothers, we would like to speak to you about pastoral and canonical concerns surrounding the abortion decision and its victims. There is great need for clarity on some issues especially that of excommunication *latae sententiae* for abortion, which is called for by canon law (c. 1398, *Codex Iuris Canonici, CIC*). We also need to speak about what a priest should do in situations where he knows a woman is intending to abort a baby. How is he to react? How should he *not* react? What practical and spiritual measures can he take to stop the killing? And other matters. I believe this issue will be of great interest and practical help to those of you who wish to learn how to have the Heart of Christ in dealing with this real pastoral challenge.

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We offer greetings to all of our brothers in the English-speaking world who are preparing for the priesthood. We are also having this newsletter translated into French and Spanish, Romanian and (possibly!) Portuguese for the benefit of our brothers who share with us this sacred calling to be the Light of Christ to the culture of death. Anyone is free to use the materials of this publication for his own newsletter. We only ask that you cite Human Life International as the source.

Be assured that we here at Human Life International in America are praying for you and your vocation each day at the altar of the Lord.

Fraternally,

Rev. Thomas J. Euteneuer

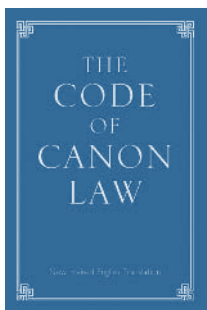
Rev. Thomas J. Euteneuer, President
Human Life International

CANONICAL ASPECTS OF ABORTION

Rev. Frank Papa, SOLT, Chaplain for HLI

Every true crime is a sin... but not every sin is a crime.

Some sins are so detrimental to the common good of a society that it is necessary for the lawmaker to impute them as crimes (e.g., murder, torture, etc.). Such is the case with regard to the grave sin of abortion.



The Church, from earliest times, has held the sin of abortion to be an abominable crime; and penalties have been imposed for many centuries. The condemnations of popes, councils, saints, pastors, and Doctors of the Church have been consistent down through the centuries, even to our own times. For example, we read in *The Didache* (“The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles,” written before the end of the 2nd century): You shall not kill by abortion the fruit of the womb and you shall not murder the infant already born.¹

The early Fathers of the Church were quite explicit and graphic in their condemnation of abortion. For example, St. Athenagoras wrote that Christians regard as murderers women who use potions to abort their children; and he rebukes those who kill babies in the wombs of their mothers, “where they are already the object of the care of Divine Providence.” (Vatican translation *L’Osservatore Romano*).²

St. Augustine, in his work “Marriage and Concupiscence,” wrote of abortion: “Sometimes this sexually indulgent cruelty or this cruel sexual indulgence goes so far as to procure potions, which produce sterility. If the desired result is not achieved, the mother terminates the life and expels the fetus which was in her womb in such a way that the child dies before having lived or, if the baby was living already in its mother’s womb, it is killed before being born.”³

1 *Didache Apostolorum*, Funk edition. Patres Apostolici, V, 2

2 Athenagorus, *A Plea On Behalf of Christians*, 35 (cf. PG 6, 970)

3 St. Augustine, *De Nuptiis et Concupiscentiis*, c. 15., Vatican translation, “L’Osservatore Romano”

In recent times, Pope Pius XII stated the case in a clear, concise, and authoritative manner: “As long as a man is not guilty, his life is untouchable, and therefore any act directly tending to destroy [his life] is illicit, whether such destruction is intended as an end in itself or only as a means to an end, whether it is a question of life in the embryonic stage or in a stage of full development or already in its final stages.” (Discourses and Radio Messages, VI, 183ff.)

In our own day the New Code of Canon Law states: “A person who actually procures an abortion incurs a *latae sententiae* excommunication.” (Canon 1398: *latae sententiae* is equivalent to saying that the excommunication is *automatic*).

Pope John Paul II, in his encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* (March 25, 1995), references the many instances in the Church’s history of her consistent teaching against abortion. The British/Irish commentary on the New Code of Canon Law, reinforces the encyclical when it states: “No reputable canonist can purport to interpret this Can. 1398 without having first carefully studied this most recent teaching of the magisterium, and not least its specific references to the consistent tradition in this matter.”⁴ The encyclical provides clear instruction and leaves no wiggle-room for those who would “wash their hands” of their responsibility in attempting or actually procuring an abortion. Of course, the *ipso facto* canonical penalty of excommunication is reserved for those who are responsible for the actual procuring of an abortion.

Who can be culpably involved in abortions?

When it comes to procuring an abortion, more than one person is usually involved. Most of us immediately think of the mother; but in the natural course of things, the father, too, may be guilty of promoting the crime. But the list does not stop there; others may be responsible for instigating or formally assisting in the procuring of an abortion:

- Family members
- Relatives, friends, and acquaintances
- Counselors
- The surgeon, nurses, and staff of an abortuary
- Politicians, legislators and judges who enact, enforce, or promote abortion
- Anyone who formally cooperates in making possible the procuring of an abortion.⁵

4 *Canon Law, Letter and Spirit*, The Canon Law Society of Great Britain and Ireland, p. 808, Footnote 2.

5 Cf. *Evangelium Vitae*, Pope John Paul II, March 25, 1995.

Any formal accomplices likewise come under the penalty of automatic excommunication from the Church.

Pastoral Concerns

In Cases of Danger of Death

If a situation exists where the penitent is in danger of death, Canon 976 states: Any priest, even though he lacks the faculty to hear confessions, can validly and lawfully absolve any penitents who are in danger of death, from any censures (e.g., excommunication) and sins (e.g., abortion), even if an approved priest is present.

In Cases of Urgency

If the attempt to abort is unsuccessful, all individuals are guilty of mortal sin, but they don't incur the canonical penalty of excommunication. It's most important for priests to make that distinction in every instance particularly when hearing confessions, since the confessor does not have the faculty to remit an excommunication unless he has been granted such a faculty by the Ordinary (e.g., a diocesan bishop, etc. See Canon 1355.2)⁶

Some diocesan bishops grant all priests having faculties to hear confessions within their domain the extended faculty to remit from the penalty of excommunication for procuring an abortion. The confessor must first remit the excommunication, and then he may proceed to absolve from the mortal sin.

However, even when a confessor does not possess the faculty to absolve a penitent from the automatic excommunication, he may do so in order to relieve a penitent who finds it difficult to remain in the state of mortal sin. In this case, the confessor may remit the excommunication and proceed to absolve from the sin. The confessor is also to impose an appropriate penance; and, to the extent necessitated, the confessor is to require that the penitent make reparation of any scandal or damage. Moreover, since the excommunication is reserved to the competent

⁶ In Church law, and "Ordinary" is a member of the clergy who has ordinary jurisdictional power over a certain territory concerning matters of *public* concern. The term "Ordinary" includes, among others, the pope (who has supreme jurisdiction); diocesan bishops and those appointed as their vicars; prelates nullius; capitular vicars; the administrator of a vacant diocese; major superiors of exempt clerical communities (e.g., a provincial superior of the Franciscans, etc.). Those that represent them are also called "Ordinaries." The term "Ordinary" is derived from the Latin word *ordinaries*, which means "regular," "customary," or "usual."

superior (e.g., the Ordinary), the penitent is still required to contact the superior in order to obtain full remittance from the excommunication, so the confessor, in remitting the excommunication, must impose on the penitent the obligation to seek remission from the superior within one month, under pain of once again incurring excommunication. Upon contacting the superior, the penitent must also fulfill the superior's instructions.

The law also permits the confessor himself—in the place of the penitent—to seek remission from the penalty of excommunication, from the competent superior, without mentioning any names (Canon 1357.2).

In Cases of Religion, Age, and Ignorance

Canon law does not apply the penalty of automatic excommunication to a person who is not Catholic, or who does not have the use of reason, or to a woman who has not reached her 16th year of age. Nor does canon law excommunicate automatically someone who was truly not aware of the penalty. This would apply to most of the women being forced into abortion by circumstances or by others who want them to have abortions against their free will. One can presume that there is a general conscientious awareness about Divine Law that prohibits the killing of the innocent (Fifth Commandment), but that does not mean that a Catholic woman would always know explicitly that she would incur excommunication by her act of abortion. In such cases abortion would still be a mortal sin, but she would not necessarily be excommunicated. These matters have to be discerned very carefully by the priest in the context of a confession, and in the case of doubt a priest should have recourse to the Tribunal of his diocese to clarify the matter.

Excommunication: A Medicinal Penalty

The Church's reason for the "penalty of excommunication" is not so much for the purpose of punishing the delinquent person; but rather to prompt the offender to repent of the sin, reform his/her life, and be returned to God's grace. The penalty then, is meant to revivify the soul, to be a spiritual remedy, a spiritual "medicine," so to speak, in order to enable the offender to see the grave sinfulness of his/her act in all its internal and external realities; and thus to repent and to return to the bosom of the Church.

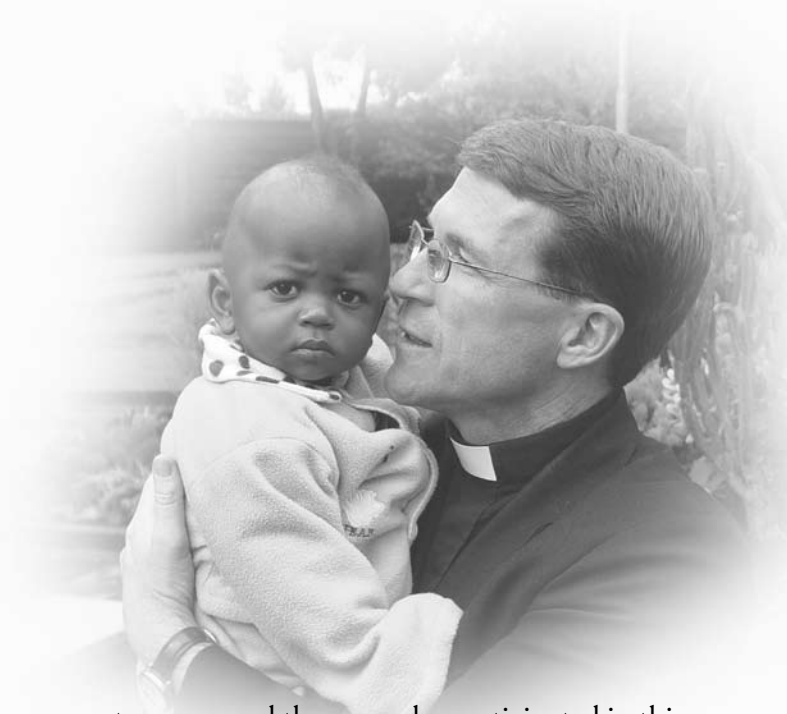
The Heart of a Pastor and the Abortion Decision

Rev. Thomas J. Euteneuer

Eighteen years as a priest in America has brought me into contact with many women who are in crisis pregnancies and who struggle with the decision to abort. I have exercised my priestly ministry in five different parishes, at abortion mills where the killing takes place, inside of crisis pregnancy centers, and in the confessional. There is almost no crisis pregnancy scenario that I have not encountered, and through it all I have felt that my priesthood (as distinct from my personality) is what has been the deciding factor in saving the lives of so many babies from abortion and of helping so many women and families to stay safe and healthy.

Because of the breakdown of marriage and family in western society, we have an increasing problem with so-called “crisis pregnancies.” I have explained this dynamic many times to seminarians, and the phenomenon bears repeating. Abortion is not the root problem of the culture of death: it is the symptom. The root problem is contraception which, when propagated and justified by anti-life terms like “safe sex” and “reproductive health,” gets a society hooked on promiscuity. The more a society has birth control, the more sexual promiscuity there will be. It’s that simple. Then, as an inevitable consequence, promiscuous sex and adultery create a demand for abortion because pregnancy now becomes something that is unwelcome. It is a crisis instead of a blessing. Promiscuous men and women really want sex without babies, so when a baby shows up the pregnancy is termed “crisis” and the baby “unwanted.” Abortion is then offered as a convenient back-up.

Many times we come into contact with women and men who are in the midst of just such a crisis. They did not “plan” for a baby, and now the rest of their life’s plans are threatened: finishing university, unable to get the work they want due to pregnancy, unable to afford a baby, the threat of family embarrassment, etc. All of these factors create tension for the unexpectedly



pregnant woman and the man who participated in this act with her, and these people or their family members often find themselves at the church door asking for help from the priest. What does a priest do with the woman in a crisis pregnancy?

“Drop everything” theology

Keep in mind that the woman in a crisis pregnancy is often surrounded by people who want her to have an abortion. Indeed, she may be in a situation of coercion by a more powerful man or by family members where she feels she has no “choice” but to abort. In many societies family honor is at stake in a situation like this, and recourse to the death of the baby is seen as a more viable solution to the problem than public embarrassment.

Fear then is the predominant factor coercing a woman into abortion. The overwhelming majority of post-abortive women say that fear is the principal emotion they feel when they are in a state of crisis pregnancy. It is that fear which drives them into abortion even if someone is not standing over them demanding it. A moment which is imbued by fear is not the most propitious moment to make a good decision by any means, but that is why feminists are always pushing for “abortion on demand;” that is, they want no restrictions whatsoever to abortion because they capitalize on the woman’s vulnerable emotional state in making such a life-and-death decision without reflection and without restriction.

The priest, when he comes into contact with the

abortion-minded woman or her family, must “drop everything” and help her. This is truly a life-or-death situation which the Lord has put him in and requires an immediate pastoral response from a man who has the Heart of Christ. Think of a crisis pregnancy as a hostage situation: the innocent baby is held hostage in the womb, and someone has a gun to her head. That gun is symbolic of the abortionist’s suction machine that will kill the baby in a few days or weeks if *some clear-thinking person* does not take the gun away. You, Father, are that person. Drop everything and save that baby, and in the meantime you will also save the woman from certain injury from abortion and even possible death.

Drop everything theology is based on the notion that the priest, sensing the threat of death of an innocent, must be willing in a situation like that to leave other matters aside for a time and attend to the real concerns of this woman. Nothing is more important at that moment. God in His divine providence has “sent” this woman or family to the priest who will act as Shepherd. He will both drive away the wolf from the vulnerable sheep and care for them as the image in Isaiah 40:11 says: “In his arms he gathers the lambs, carrying them in his bosom and leading the ewes with care.”

Step 1: Safe haven

Provide her (and the father of the child or her family) with a safe and confidential environment in which to talk about their crisis. Listen carefully first, and do not interject too much because they are very emotional in their crisis state and must get the emotion out. This is just basic pastoral counseling skill. Only after they have let out the emotion are you to give your “advice.”

Step 2: God and values

Some psychological theories about pastoral counseling say that you are not to interject talk about God and Christian values too much because it might drive people away who are trying to avoid religious or moralistic arguments. To this I say, “Nonsense!” God is our greatest ally at this stage, especially after the woman has vented emotion about the crisis. Remember that emotions often block access to the deepest values inside a person’s heart, and once the emotions are out, God is able to get in!

Without moralizing or scolding the woman about the sin that led to the pregnancy—that can be dealt with

later, remember that this is a *life-or-death* situation—you as a priest must tell her that God loves her and her baby eternally and tenderly and will provide for her needs no matter what. God loves them *both!* We do not disregard the woman’s crisis any more than we disregard the baby’s life. We hold them both in dynamic union so that the woman does not disregard the life of the baby either. Her perception of you, the priest, then, is of someone who is not just upholding Church doctrine on the sanctity of life but of someone who is deeply concerned about her life, too.

We tell her that God does not want her to abort her baby. That seems simple but true, and you would be amazed at what kind of response that this reasoning gets from the woman. It does not appeal to her fear (“if you abort you will be damned”) or to her insecurities about health (“you could get injured by the abortion”) but rather it appeals to her deepest sense of who she is—a mother! She is not *going to be* a mother, she already *is* a mother. Her maternal instinct will respond intuitively when you tell her that her vocation to motherhood was somehow mysteriously willed by God in this circumstance.

Stage 3: Hope

After appealing to her maternal instincts and deepest values about the sanctity of life, we open her heart up to all the possibilities that the Church and our respective societies offer to women and families. At this stage she

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needs to be given practical options so that she can see in her mind that there is not a contradiction between this baby inside of her and the rest of her life's plans. If she needs material help, we offer it. Even if we cannot provide it at that moment, we are leaders of communities, and we can always provide for these needs when a life is threatened. Sometimes helping her or her family gain access to government or community services is a way to help. She may not know how. At other times there is just a need to open her eyes to support systems and services that are available to her for the long-term raising of this child.

In those societies where there is great family shame surrounding an out-of-wedlock pregnancy, the priest must act as a mediating influence and help the family to find a way to "save face." This is not easy of course, but the family must be taught that "family honor" is not an absolute value, especially where the life of an innocent baby is at stake. Priests are in a position of authority and can often quietly arrange human and compassionate solutions, which guard both the honor of the family and woman, as well as the life of the baby. The priest does not justify the sin that led to the pregnancy, but he uses the opportunity to speak with the young persons and the families to help them see the correct vision of human sexuality and to remind them of our deepest values of respect for human life. Furthermore, he must stand as a pillar of iron in defense of that baby's life when a family member continues to push for abortion. If need be, he visits that person and intercedes personally for that baby.

Above all, the priest must realize that the woman, the man who impregnated her, and the family will take their view of the future from the priest's attitude. It is the way the priest handles himself and the love, compassion, and ingenuity that he shows them in their moment of crisis that will profoundly impact their way of seeing their "problem." We are reminded of the words of St. Paul in moments like this: "In Him who is the source of my strength, I can do all things!" (Phil 4:13) We must communicate this hopefulness to those in our pastoral care and trust that the Lord really will provide for the needs of this family and woman. This is essentially a work of faith, and we are the center point of this faith experience.

What not to do

Brothers, please do not scold the young woman and

man who find themselves in the throes of an unexpected pregnancy. We are all wounded sinners, and in the area of human sexuality people make many mistakes. Jesus treated with compassion those who were weak in this area and after forgiving their sins simply told them to go and sin no more. We would do well to imitate His patience with erring human nature, while at the same time providing guidance on how to maintain sexual purity in the face of many temptations. This is what they call a "teachable moment" for the young people. They will learn much by this mistake, but they will live a life of regret if they compound a sexual mistake with a murder of a baby. We must teach them not to renounce their birthright for a bowl of pottage like Esau, who ended up regretting the loss of his father's blessing.

At the same time, we do not justify the decision to abort in any way. Never under any circumstances admit that this is a possible "option" for the woman, and do not pretend that you will stand by idly if she decides to abort against your counsel. Abortion is a totally immoral decision, and you are there to assist her in making the correct moral decision. If there is an adamant will on the part of the woman to kill that baby, you have a moral obligation to try and change her decision to abort by all moral and legal means. There are times when this means that you will stand against family members and boyfriends, school, and government officials who want that baby dead. Nonetheless, your job is not to make friends, but to preach and live the truth. You are a shepherd with a staff to drive away the wolf, not a gatekeeper looking the other way as the thief and murderer enters your corral.

Post crisis period

When the initial crisis is over and the woman or the family has made a definitive decision to save the life of that child, then your pastoral care changes from crisis management to one of charitable assistance. This is necessary for the ongoing confidence of the woman, who will often doubt that she has made the right decision. A common slander of the abortion industry regarding pro-lifers is that we only care for the woman when she is pregnant, but after that we abandon her. This is totally untrue. The Catholic Church has the largest single private network of healthcare and social services in the world, and we, as priests, always have some services of the parish, diocese, or other Catholic charitable organizations to fall back on to assist families in their needs.

Survivors of Abortion

Due to HLI's dedication, more than 5,000 babies have been rescued in Chile and over 3,500 in Austria. In Mexico alone, over 40,000 babies have been saved. Worldwide, tens of thousands of families are benefiting from Human Life International's global approach to life and family issues.



Juan Daniel, Mexico City, age 2 and 8 years old.



Andrea, Chile, age 5 months and 16 years old.



Fernando, Chile, age 6 months and 17 years old.



Carolina, Chile, age 5 months and 17 years old.



Ivette, Chile, age 4 months and 17 years.

While the priest cannot attend to everyone who needs help, he has the responsibility of assisting those who are in life-and-death circumstances to the extent that he has the resources in his parish or community. If services do not exist in a local community, he may have to *form* a group of people to help women and families in their needs.

One final matter that is essential in the post-crisis period is to provide the woman and her family with strong prayer support. Keep in mind that even after the crisis period is over the woman will still be tempted to abort, and there will still be people and influences pushing her in the direction of abortion. Prayer will help to restrain the demonic forces of abortion and assist her in continuing to make the right decision to bring life into this world. In countries such as the United States a woman can abort during all nine months of pregnancy, so the prayer support and personal accompaniment is utterly essential. The priest does not have to accompany every family during the months of pregnancy, but he must insist that the families have this prayer support.

Conclusion

I repeat what I said above about the priesthood: we are blessed to be called to this state of life that so many people look to for assistance and inspiration. It is Christ's Priesthood which He generously shares with us, and we are stewards of that Sacrament for the good of souls. He sends us those in need. He uses our priesthood to save lives and souls, and when we are ready to drop everything and serve His "least brethren" in danger of death and their mothers in such need, He will never cease to bless us.

Once I was standing and praying in front of an abortion center in the United States, and 18-year-old girl drove into the parking lot with her boyfriend to go in for an abortion. I said nothing to her but just prayed. She stopped immediately as she saw me, got out of the car and said, "Father, I was going to have an abortion today, but when I saw you here I just could not. Thank you for being here!" Needless to say, Christ, the High Priest, sent His unworthy priest to that place that day to save a baby and perhaps even a soul.

Recommended Resources

www.afterabortion.org

This is the web's most complete source of information on the after effects of abortion and post-abortion healing. It has over 500 links to thousands of pages of original research, testimonies, articles, and resources. Most of these are drawn from articles and books published by the Elliot Institute, one of the nation's leading authorities on post-abortion issues.

www.rachelsvineyard.org

Offers weekend retreats held across the United States for any woman or man who has struggled with the emotional and spiritual pain of an abortion.

www.hopeafterabortion.org

A Catholic post-abortion resource website.

www.silentnomoreawareness.org

The National Silent No More Awareness Campaign is an effort to make the public aware of the devastation abortion brings to women, men, and their families. This effort is a key to make abortion unthinkable and persuade society that women deserve better than abortion.

www.heartbeatinternational.org

Heartbeat International is a Christian, interdenominational association of life-affirming pregnancy resource centers. Long-term and follow-up services for clients and their families include medical care, post-abortion support, and counseling (one-on-one or group).

www.fatherhoodforever.org/main/index.php

Fatherhood Forever Foundation, Inc. was created to address the issue of abortion and men and to provide inspiration and restoration to these forgotten fathers. They accomplish this by creating public awareness on the issue that men are hurt by abortion, by providing men with the resources and tools necessary to recover, and by encouraging and assisting other organizations to address this issue.

www.geocities.com/kekogut/abortion/abortion.html

Testimonies of 15 women who regret their abor-

tions and other information on how abortion hurts women.

www.stacyzallie.org/home.htm

The Stacy Zallie Foundation's Post Abortion Comfort Portal offers understanding, compassion, education and resources to help find the way out of the pain of having had an abortion.

www.ramahinternational.org/index.html

Ramah International is a non-profit, evangelical Christian ministry designed to outline post-abortion syndrome at an international level in three ways: 1) offer the hope of healing to those struggling with a past abortion decision; 2) minister to those in crisis pregnancy situations who are considering abortion by outlining the emotional, spiritual, psychological, and physical side-effects of abortion, as well as offering physical and emotional support through referrals to local pregnancy care centers; 3) educate, equip, and encourage those working with post-abortive and abortion-minded individuals within pregnancy care centers, individual ministries and churches.

www.abortionrecoverydirectory.org

The Abortion Recovery Directory is a service of the Abortion Recovery International Network. A.R.I.N. is a non-profit, affiliate organization, striving to unite abortion recovery efforts worldwide. Their inclusive effort provides help, healing and hope to those wounded by abortion. A.R.I.N. encourages and educates abortion recovery counselors, establishes a collaborative network around the globe, and enlightens society to abortion's aftermath.

www.abortionconcern.org/index.php

Provides a large number of personal testimonies of women forced or coerced into abortion. For this reason, Abortion Concern seeks to give a 'voice' to women (only) who have experienced distress or physical complications or injury after induced abortion(s) in the hope of helping them and other women who have experienced distress.